

Pearl Pohl

WCHF Induction Statement*

Five years ago in 1986 I presented a statement on Ernest Swift's induction into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame. Today I am presenting one for Pearl Pohl's induction. I personally knew and had some associations with seven of the past inductees and both Pearl Pohl and Richard Hemp. In my opinion Pearl Pohl ranks with the best advocates of natural resource conservation in Wisconsin's history. My opinion is based in part on the fact that Pearl Pohl effectively contributed the equivalent of two normal life times of service to the cause of natural resource conservation.

The first life time was as an elementary school teacher in the Milwaukee school system which obligated her only to teach the three "R's" and incidentally as appropriate, history and geography. But, by her own choice she also taught what can be logically described as relatively formalized natural resources conservation and management. Obviously, her teaching efforts must have been highly successful since she stayed on the Milwaukee payroll for 45 years from 1908-1953. By this time she was 66 years old. This record of successful teaching is certainly equivalent to one lifetime of a normal individual.

But, in addition to her teaching effort and equally, if not more importantly in the period of 1900-53, she also participated in the advancement of innumerable public efforts on the importance of natural resources and their conservation. A few examples follow.

1. She successfully collaborated with others to pass legislation making environmental education mandatory in 1936, some 55 years ago.
2. She pioneered in getting students outdoors which included field trips to learn about and participate in most aspects of conservation as well as writing letters to Congressmen expressing their concerns.
3. In 1952 she became the president of the very active Milwaukee Chapter of the Izaak Walton League.

Her second life time equivalent in natural resources conservation included the following activities.

1. In 1960 she founded the Young Wisconsin Conservationists Association sponsored by the Izaak Walton League, which is still very active to date. It hosts selected high school students for two day sessions. Any adult who participated in these sessions as counselors or speakers can attest to their success. I was invited to speak at three of these sessions and was most impressed with the students' interests and activities.
2. In 1960 she also organized the LaBudde Ladies Chapter of the Izaak Walton League.
3. She was also extremely active in almost innumerable citizen and professional organizations wherever environmental issues were at stake. These included:

a. Fighting to preserve the Flambeau River State Forest, and the natural quality of the Namekagon River, keeping portions of Wisconsin rivers such as the Namekagon and Wolf, under a Wild Rivers designation; and the establishment of numerous reforestation projects.

b. Her other conservation interests include watershed management and managing fisheries.

c. In 1965 she was the founding member of the Wisconsin Council for Conservation Education.

d. Most remarkably she continued her interests and activities into 1982 at which time she was 95 years old.

The above efforts received many notable awards too numerous to delineate separately on this occasion.

In closing, it is important to briefly comment on factors that led to the many contributions Pearl Pohl made to the conservation of natural resources in Wisconsin and elsewhere for that matter. The first of these was her realization that Wisconsin's natural resource base was being disastrously consumed, altered and despoiled. The second was her determination to learn why this was happening, what must be done to reverse this trend and by whom. The third was to make a life-long dedication to do everything possible in the pursuit of this goal.

Anyone that personally knew Pearl Pohl can attest to the success of her dedication to natural resource conservation. I was one of several people that were with her a short time before her death at the age of 95. The scene was her house in Milwaukee. The purpose was to assure that her files would be transferred to a safe and useable repository. She was in her bed, her mind was functional as always, but she was too weak to stay continuously awake while we were there. But she woke up often enough to direct us in carrying out her wishes. Thus ended her full second life of contributions. Now we can only say Amen to a truly great person.

Cy Kabat

*I'm going to read my statement to avoid rambling. This is being done in keeping with Pearl Pohl's character, viz "If you have something to say do it and move on."